

PRESS RELEASE

THE VICE PRESIDENT
OFFICE OF THE PRESS SECRETARY

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REMARKS OF VICE PRESIDENT GEORGE BUSH
AT THE MIAMI CITIZENS AGAINST CRIME LUNCHEON
OMNI HOTEL, MIAMI, FLORIDA
TUESDAY, FEBRUARY 16, 1982

It's a pleasure for me to be here today to accept your kind invitation to address this Luncheon, sponsored by the Miami Citizens Against Crime. We're here today to discuss a sensitive and serious situation. We're here to learn more about the violence that has been inflicted upon the people, about the hardships that have been imposed upon the community. I am also here to report to you on what actions have been taken during the past two weeks since the President's Task Force was established.

In his announcement of the Task Force on January 28, President Reagan said, "The once tranquil area of South Florida has become a landing area for hundreds of thousands of refugees, and the nation's major terminal for the smuggling of illegal drugs into the United States."

He went on to say that "massive immigration, rampant crime and epidemic drug smuggling have created a serious problem." He added that "the Federal Government has a special responsibility to fill in temporarily and do what it can to reduce and, it is hoped, to eliminate these problems." The President has appointed the very highest officials in his Administration to deal with them. The Secretaries of State, Defense, Transportation, Treasury, Health and Human Services, the Attorney General of the United States, and Presidential Counselor Edwin Meese are members of the Task Force. He has asked me to head up this group.

When the President decided to take action to help you solve the problems unique to this state, he did not intend this Task Force to supercede the responsibilities of state and local law enforcement officials. He expects us to assist and coordinate our efforts with state and local authorities in order that we, together, restore civility, safety and calm to South Florida.

But it is the intention of the President to do what we can to make the streets and public places of South Florida safe for our children, our senior citizens and all other residents of the area.

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We believe that the people of South Florida have a constitutional right to live without fear and intimidation. We believe that those who deprive our citizens of their constitutional rights must be apprehended and brought to justice.

We also believe that no single ethnic or racial group should be singled out as bearing sole responsibility for the problems of South Florida. Yes, there are illegal aliens involved in drug trade. But let us remember that, in the President's words, "the overwhelming majority of these refugees are peaceful, freedom-loving people. Most have resettled in new homes and in new communities in order to build a better life for themselves. In the years to come, they will take their place alongside millions of others who came before them in making ours a better land." To those, we extend the hand of friendship.

To those who commit crime, who engage in violence, we say, the American people have great patience, but that patience has been sapped. South Florida cannot be a haven for criminals, for drug traffickers, for hired assassins.

During the past two weeks, we have been working long hours in trying to determine what can be done in the immediate short-term and in the long-run to help solve problems related to the Task Force -- especially the problem of crime. I would like to list today a number of decisions that have been made in a very short time to launch our effort. Others will be forthcoming in the weeks and months ahead.

Here are the problems relating to crime, as we see them, based on information provided us by law enforcement officials and responsible civilians representing various organizations here in the area.

- 1.) Insufficient jail space;
- 2.) Insufficient court rooms;
- 3.) An insufficient number of judges;
- 4.) No permanent U.S. Attorney and 18 vacancies for assistant U.S. Attorneys;
- 5.) Insufficient manpower in all law enforcement agencies, such as the Drug Enforcement Agency, the FBI, Customs, Immigration, Alcohol, Tobacco and Firm Arms Division and perhaps the Internal Revenue Service;
- 6.) Insufficient offshore surveillance;
- 7.) A need for greater cooperation with the Bahamas, Bolivia, Columbia and Peru.

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While the problems are numerous and serious, we have taken specific initiatives to make improvements in each of those areas.

1.) The President intends to nominate Stanley Marcus to be the new U.S. Attorney for Miami. He is a brilliant young prosecutor with a proven record of accomplishment in the area of organized crime.

2.) We will work with him in finding the very best assistant U.S. Attorneys from Florida and throughout the rest of the country -- prosecutors who have established records of accomplishment in combating crime.

3.) We now have an Administrative agreement between the Justice and Treasury Departments in setting up a joint Task Force consisting of DEA, the FBI and Customs which will allow Customs to investigate drug related crime. In order to provide this joint Task Force with teeth, we will put 130 more Customs investigators into South Florida immediately.

4.) As many of you know, the Miami office of the FBI will be strengthened with an increase of 43 new agents. 33 have already arrived.

5.) We have approved an increase of 20 agents for the Drug Enforcement Agency to work in Miami.

6.) We are establishing a Financial Law Enforcement Center at the Treasury Department which will be extremely helpful in ensuring the full utilization of the information that is now available and of that which will become available under Operation Greenback. The Financial Law Enforcement Center started out with 18 experts. We will add 20 more to work on national problems involved in laundering of money, and an additional 20 experts who will focus on the Miami and South Florida area exclusively.

In this regard, I want to make this point as strongly as I can: our investigative efforts will be as stringent on bankers and businessmen who profit from crime, as on drug traffickers, the drug pushers, the hired assassins and others. will be no free lunch for the white collar criminal.

7.) The Alcohol, Tobacco and Firearms Agency will soon be divided with the responsibility for firearms going to the Secret Service. You may be aware of personnel cuts in A.T.F. but I want to assure you that not only will there not be any cuts in the South Florida area, instead we will be beefing up the Secret Service in order to launch an aggressive program to cut back on the illegal use of firearms, including the terrorism of Miami.

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8.) Along with the Attorney General, I will be working with Chief Justice Warren Burger to see that additional judges are provided to South Florida. Additional court rooms will be provided to relieve the backlog of cases that are now pending and to expedite those cases that come up in the future.

9.) I will appoint an on-scene Task Force Coordinator to be headquartered here in Miami to coordinate local, state and federal activities. The job will be to make sure that there is complete cooperation among the many diverse departments and agencies involved in solving this problem. The coordinator will report directly to the Task Force.

10.) The Coast Guard will immediately and significantly increase its forces and manpower in the South Florida area to help in the coming months with the interdiction of illegal drugs and aliens. In addition, there will be no budget cuts for the Coast Guard in South Florida.

11.) In order to increase our intelligence and surveillance, we will put back in operation a sophisticated AWAC's type aircraft. This is a highly efficient and effective method of detecting aircraft entering the area illegally. The Customs Department and other Law Enforcement Agencies will be working closely with this intelligence operation.

12.) Secretary of the Treasury Donald Regan has created a new position in the Internal Revenue Service called Assistant Commissioner for Criminal Investigations. This position will be filled shortly and will allow the IRS to conduct a more aggressive approach to the prosecution of tax related drug crime.

13.) Secretary Haig will work directly with the Governments of Columbia, Bolivia, Peru and Jamaica to cut the flow of illegal drugs into the United States.

14.) The Urban Mass Transit Transportation Administration will provide Metro Dade County with a transit security demonstration grant. This grant will implement a program designed to ensure passengers' security on public transit buses. The program involves the use of plainclothes decoys working in cooperation with uniformed officers.

15.) I have established a sub-group of the Task Force headed up by the Department of Justice to look at the problems and find solutions to the overcrowding of federal jails and prisons. This Task Force wants, and will have, federal facilities to keep criminals off the street.

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16.) We are working with the Congress, the Departments of Justice and State to expedite the implementation of the President's immigration policy aimed at assisting the South Florida area. In his testimony before the Congress, the Attorney General said, "The Administration is determined not to permit another Mariel."

I am confident that these actions will be of significant assistance, not only in fighting crime but in preventing the influx of illegal immigrants. While it is a lengthy list, there is much, much more to be done. The process of consultation and coordination between the federal establishment and those of you at the local level must and will be improved.

Despite the efforts and the role of the federal government, it is evident that what we accomplish will be accomplished only by working together. I have been greatly impressed by local and state officials and the various civic groups that have done such an outstanding job faced with overwhelming odds and tremendous difficulties.

The door of the task force is open to you and we welcome all who come in a spirit of cooperation and concern for this area. If we are to be successful, we must work together. We must put aside whatever differences there are today or may have been in the past.

In this effort, there is no room for partisan politics. The situation is difficult. We do not need acrimony coming from politicians anxious to blame others for these difficulties. We do not need politicians tripping all over themselves attempting to take credit for whatever successes may be achieved.

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